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LOOKING FORWARD

By

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LOOKING FORWARD

ON November 11 Marshal Foch and his colleagues, on behalf of the Allied Nations, signed the armistice which announced to the world that the unexampled sacrifices of the past four years had been crowned with victory. Relief and gratitude, wonder and congratulation have had their first expression, and in the more sober days that follow we are face to face again with duty and with opportunity. God has given us a triumph beyond our hopes. It is for us to determine what use we shall make of it.

First of all, we would utter our heartfelt gratitude to Almighty God for the signal evidence which he has given us of His beneficent providence. Beyond and above all human factors in the great events which have transpired we have been conscious of a divine actor overruling evil for good and mak-

ing the very wrath of men to praise Him. We realize that what we have won we have won not by ourselves or for ourselves. We are trustees for God and for the generations that come after us, and He will hold us responsible for our fidelity to this trust.

Foremost in our thought and prayer are the soldiers and sailors who are coming back to resume the places which they have left for a time at the call of their country, and the families of those who will never come back. We must see to it that among the voices that speak our welcome to these home-comers the Church has her word of greeting and cheer. And we must speak by our deeds even more loudly than by our words. Let us have ready for these returning soldiers a place to work and something worth working for. May they find the Church alert, active, resolute, united, committed with heart and soul to the completion of the task they have begun, the task of free-

ing mankind from the tyranny of ruthless force, and laying the foundations of a new social order wherein men and nations shall dwell together in freedom, justice, brotherhood and peace.

To these principles we would dedicate ourselves anew. We would do this as patriots in our relations with other peoples, that we may carry into the tasks of peace the principles which have inspired us in making war. We must reassert the truth long ago uttered by Israel's prophets that nations, like individuals, are sons of God, and that for nations, as for individuals, greatness and liberty alike are realized through united service. We must reinforce, by every influence in our power, the efforts of our President and his associates at the peace table to establish a league of free nations in which law shall replace license and cooperation, rivalry. God grant that they may be guided in their counsels to such wise action that this purpose

of unity may find effective and responsible expression, and that we who remain at home may so second their efforts by voice and pen that the cause for which our soldiers have dared and sacrificed so greatly may not be imperiled by our lack of courage and faith.

We must act in the spirit of our faith. Spared as we have been the extremity of sacrifice, we must share with the suffering and needy of all lands the burdens which they have borne for our sake. We must do this freely and, of course, as becomes co-workers in a common task. As we have been comrades in war let us remain partners in peace. May we see the world's need as a whole and render a world-wide ministry. While we deal justly with those who have done wrong, holding them to a strict account for their deeds, let us not so act as to shut the door against repentance and amendment, but rather as becomes servants of the Christ who came to save

sinners and who has said to us through His apostle, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him to drink, for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head."

And while we follow justice and mercy abroad, we must not forget to do justice and show mercy at home. What shall it profit us as a nation to gain the whole world and lose our own soul? With what conscience can we preach unity to the nations if we ourselves are divided by rivalries of class or of race or of creed? In the "Social Creed of the Churches" we have publicly declared our faith that the principles of the Gospel are valid for all life, economic, political, social, racial. We believe that man is more precious than anything that man makes and that man grows to be man through freedom and responsibility. In all questions which affect his life as producer and spender, questions of hours and of wages, of housing

and of sanitation, of employment and of management, of the ownership of the tools of labor and the distribution of the products of labor, we must apply Christ's principle of the sacredness of personality. Not the amount of goods produced must be our test of national prosperity, but the uses made of them and, above all, the spirit of those who produce and of those who use. Let us, therefore, urge upon capital its responsibility to make labor its partner, and upon labor its duty to observe loyally the agreements it has made, upon the more highly organized groups their obligation to those who are still unorganized, and to all their duty to society as a whole, of which they are at once servants and trustees. Inheritors of the Protestant tradition of freedom of conscience, we must not be afraid of free discussion, even if we disagree with what is uttered. Whether in the field of religion or politics, industrial organization or social rela-

tionships, we must meet falsehood with the truth, confident that if the truth be spoken in love and exemplified in life it must in the end prevail.

Above all, let us illustrate within the Church itself the principles we desire to see realized in the world. During the months that have passed we have been working together for ends beyond ourselves and through our common work have discovered our kinship with one another in the deepest and most vital spiritual experience. We must guard what we have won. Having proved that even in spite of our divisions we can work together as Christian brothers, let us dare to believe that we may realize a relationship more intimate still and be led in God's Providence into that complete unity which shall be an answer to the prayer of Christ and a witness to the world of God's purpose of salvation.

Already voices are being heard in different countries summoning us

to such a unity. Let us answer this call in the spirit in which it is given, and let us prepare for it by such conferences as shall enable us to meet our fellow Christians of other lands with a common experience and a united program. Let us with them reconsecrate ourselves to the primary task of the Church, the witness to all the peoples to that living God Who has given His Son to be the Saviour of the World and through Whom alone individuals and nations alike find strength and wisdom, unity and peace. To make men know Him in the beauty of His character and the compelling power of His spirit, to help them to see in Him the face of the Father He came to reveal, to inspire them to action that shall share this vision with those who have not seen it, and unite them in common effort to make His Will prevail in every sphere of life—this is the supreme task of the Church, and to this task we would reconsecrate ourselves today.

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